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OESTERLEY'S "THE PSALMS IN THE JEWISH CHURCH"

The Psalms in the Jewish Church. By W. O. OESTERLEY. London:

SKEFFINGTON & SONS, 1910. pp. 267.

Mr. Oesterley belongs to that class of English scholars who, while conservative adherents of the Christian Church, approach Jewish subjects with commendable fairness and sympathy and endeavor to do justice to the Jewish view voiced by Jewish authorities. His writings, therefore, are always welcomed with a certain gratification by the Jewish student, however he may differ in particulars. The work before us, written in simple style for the average reader interested in Biblical subjects, deals chiefly with the liturgical use of the Psalms in both the Temple and the Synagogue. Whether the name Jewish Church for both of these which Stanley and others brought into use in England is correct or well-chosen is not for discussion here. The author certainly knows how to elucidate his subject and render it interesting. The first two chapters are devoted to Hebrew music in general. While making good use of what has been written on Jewish Music from old Ugolino down to Benzinger, the author throws new light on its characteristic features and its relationship to that of primitive tribes and of the Oriental nations and the more refined one of the classical nations, particularly the Greek. On the whole he follows Benzinger in maintaining that the ancient Hebrew music came quite near the Bedouin and modern Egyptian music about which Lane gives interesting detail, which music, while lacking harmony and little pleasing to our ear, is yet not without peculiar charm and power. But he also thinks that ancient Egypt influenced the pre-exilic, and Babylonia the post-exilic, period, whereas the more refined Greek music left certain imprints upon the last Temple period. In al-

luding, however, to the fact mentioned by Herodotus that "the song of *Maneros* sung in Egypt was identical with the song of *Linos* heard alike in Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Greece, as it went by a different name in each race," he failed to realize the importance of this information for the tracing of the history and origin of all liturgical music. For both the *Linos* song—a corruption of the *Oi lanu*, "Woe to us!" sung at the *Adonis* rite spread all over the ancient world—and the *Maneros* song—from Marna "our lord" another name for *Adoni*—became the keynote for the religious and folk-songs of Egypt and Babylonia, Syria and Phœnicia, Phrygia and Greece. And in all likelihood the Greek *elegos* (song of mourning) was also originally the Semitic song of wailing—*eli* and *elut*, while the Canaanite vintage cry *hedad*, so often mentioned in the Scriptures, had also its origin in the cry *hoi dod* ("Alas, O friend!") uttered over the dead *Adonis-Tammuz*. Hence the singular fact that the whole Semitic music with its prevalence of the *minor* key echoes, exactly as does the Hebrew song, the *ḵinah* melody (comp. Kohler, "The Psalms in the Liturgy" in *Publications of the Gratz College*, 1897, 182 f.).

The third chapter treats of the Musical Instruments used in the Temple, which are divided into Percussion, Wind, and String Instruments. The author, however, fails to indicate to which of the four periods of music named at the close of the preceding chapter the use of these instruments may with some degree of certainty be ascribed, nor does he state that most of the headings of the Psalms, which refer to these musical instruments, point to the time of the author of the Book of Chronicles whose terminology offers the key to the musical terms found in the various Psalm headings. In regard to the Maccabean period the author might have mentioned that the terms *kitharis* and *pesanterin* in Daniel indicate that these instruments were imported from Greece over Syria. Altogether he pays too little attention to the results of historical and critical Bible research and he leaves us in the dark where we want light. It is rather surprising that he did not consult Franz Delitzsch's most valuable commentary on the Psalms. He would have found that already Delitzsch took the words *al alamot* as signifying "After the

manner of maidens," in the sense of soprano voices, although Mr. Oesterley adduces on p. 56-59 comp. 116 many new instances in favor of this explanation (comp. Köhler, *l. c.*, 183). He might have used also to great advantage the numerous historical notices, culled by Delitzsch in his Introduction, from the Talmud.

Another valuable source of information escaped the notice of our author in not having become acquainted with Prof. Graetz's Commentary on the Psalms, the best and most instructive part of which is the rich historical material and critical analysis of the Psalms given in the Introduction. In many instances Mr. Oesterley would have changed or modified his views regarding the musical terms and instruments or the character of the Psalms, had he availed himself of Graetz's studies on Psalmody during the second Temple period. Graetz rejects—and the writer of this thinks quite correctly—the view taken by mediæval and modern exegetes that in headings such as *al tashhet*, *ayyelet ha-shaḥar*, or *yonat elim reḥokim* we have the titles of ancient popular songs and instead he finds in them merely clerical corruptions of terms denoting musical instruments.

In Chapter IV which deals with "The Antecedents of the Psalms" our author refers especially to Robertson Smith as authority for the statement that the folk-songs gave the musical tunes to the sacred songs of the liturgy; the question is, whether the Levite guilds of the Temple would ever have dared to select well-known secular tunes for their sacred songs. Aside from that, it is unlikely that the tune of a vintage-song known as *al tashhet* ("Destroy it not!") should have been chosen four times for the Psalms 57, 58, 59, and 75, whereas a comparison of the heading of Psalm 9 *al mut labben* and the last words of Psalm 48 *al mut* plainly show that these musical annotations on the margin of the various Psalms had become illegible or unintelligible for the copyists. The classification of the types of songs which preceded the composition of the Psalter is according to our author (p. 64-76) the following: 1. Songs of praise either of the Deity or of the heroic ancestor; 2. Songs in memory of great events; 3. Harvest and vintage songs; 4. Meditations or Individual Prayers. This classification can scarcely

be called a good one, as the first and second class are really identical, clustering as they do around some memorial or festival day.

In speaking of the Constituent Elements of the Psalter in Ch. V (p. 78-95), Oesterley dwells at some length, without however fully elucidating the subject, on the most important point in the study of the Psalter, that is, the composite character of many of the Psalms, and the original type as well as the date of the other Psalms. It almost seems as if the ultra-conservatism of our author embarrasses him whenever he is forced to concede a point in the critical analysis of the Psalter. Rabbinical tradition knows only of 147 Psalms, and it is a mistake on the part of the author (p. 79) to refer to Kiddushin 30a for a different opinion. Strange that Samuel should be mentioned as collector and editor of the Psalms—due to a mistaken remark of the unreliable Hamburger (*Real-Encyclopaedie*). Owing to a strange remark of Briggs in his Commentary on the Psalms p. LXVIII, that the *Ani* ("the afflicted one") in the heading of Psalm 102 is a pseudonym, the author mentions *Oni* alongside of Asaph, the Korahites, Moses, Solomon, Heman, and Ethan as writers of Psalms (p. 80).

In principle Mr. Oesterley is right when he says (81 ff.) that the Psalms underwent changes when put to liturgical use; some which belonged together, forming one Psalm, such as Ps. 9 and 10, or 42 and 43, were separated, while others, which were originally different Psalms, were combined into one. Comp. Ps. 108 with 57, 8-12 and 60, 7-14; or 40, 13-17 with Ps. 70; 31, 1-13 with 71, 1-3; and 115, 4-18 with 134, 15-31. He might have mentioned also Ps. 19, 1-6 and 7-15, or Ps. 24, 1-6 and 7-10 as composite Psalms (comp. Kohler, *l. c.*, 187 f.)

It is rather surprising that the author has but a few words to say about individual psalms (p. 93 and p. 174) which forms one of the most important questions regarding the character and origin of most of the Psalm, viz., whether the Ego of the Psalms was at the outset to be the Israelitish community—which opinion is to-day held by the majority of Commentators,—or whether the Ego was originally that of the individual composer who voiced his own feelings of anguish, or thanksgiving, in the song, and only when trans-

formed into a liturgical hymn, the Psalm voiced the feelings and experiences of the religious community (see Köhler, *l. c.*). A closer examination of the various Psalms in the older collections, or the first three books, shows that many have undergone a process of transformation from individual outpourings to Congregational or Temple songs. That the headings stating the occasion on which certain Psalms were written by David are of a late origin and altogether without foundation in fact or in the text, our author obviously hesitates to say.

What is said in Ch. VI on the Poetical Structure of the Psalms may suffice for the average student but takes little cognizance of what recent writers have contributed to this interesting subject. When speaking of the Acrostic Poems (p. 198) he might have referred also to Lamentations and at the same time pointed out the fact that, like Ps. 9 and 10, Ps. 25 and 37 have been tampered with, whether owing to clerical errors or to intentional alterations it is rather difficult to say.

Ch. VII which treats of the Psalms in the Temple Worship, begins with the correct observation that the statement often made that the Psalter was the Hymn-book of the Second Temple is not strictly accurate, "for it is reasonably certain that it contains a good many Psalms which were not, and were never intended to be, sung at public worship."

While the author in his lack of critical acumen is inclined to believe in the Davidic authorship of the Psalms, taking the description of the Temple worship given in the Book of Chronicles not as a reflection of the cult of the Second Temple but as an actual historical fact, he at the same time relies on the information derived from Talmudic sources which refers exclusively to the second Temple period, and, we may add, to the post-Herodian period. Frequently the selection of Psalms for the week-days or the sabbath and festival days was made without regard to their contents and inner relation to the day.

While speaking in Ch. VIII on the Psalms in the Ancient Synagogue worship, Mr. Oesterley never considered the possibility of a large number of the Psalms having originated in such circles as

would regard prayer and song the only proper form of worship and therefore make the Synagogue their rallying place instead of the Temple with its sacrificial cult. The fact is that the *Hasidim*, the predecessors of the Pharisees and Essenes, were the authors of many of the Psalms; hence the anti-sacrificial spirit voiced in some, such as Ps. 40 and others. The remark of Mr. Oesterley that the Synagogue was primarily a place for the study of, and instruction in, the Law (p. 132) is altogether erroneous. Nor is it true that "the earliest elements of synagogal worship were developed from the Temple service." The Temple service is a compromise between the priestly and the ancient Hasidean form of worship (see Kohler, "Ursprünge und Grundformen der Synagogalen Liturgie" in *MGWJ.*, 1893, 441-451; 489-497; comp. also Kohler, "The Psalms in the Liturgy," p. 193 ff.). Ch. IX treating of the Psalms in the Modern Synagogue contains interesting material for the average reader with especial reference to the Sefardic and Ashkenazic rituals. The same useful eclecticism of our author is shown also in Ch. X in which the Psalms in Private Use are spoken of. Obviously the article on Psalmomancy, "the magic use of the Psalms," in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, X, 240, directed his attention to the *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim* of which he gives extracts, as if this superstitious practice was characteristic of the Jewish Church and not equally indulged in by the Syrian and the mediæval Christian world of Europe, as Blau in the article quoted and the art. "Bibliomancy" in the *JE.* show. How much Mr. Oesterley is fascinated by this sort of mystic lore is shown by the fact that he devotes a whole chapter to Psalm 91 called by the rabbis "The song of Evil Encounters," but his conservatism induces him so to interpret the Psalm as if its author wanted to counteract the belief in incantation and the fear of demons by referring the worshipper to *Shaddai*, "the Most High," in contrast to the *Shedim*. It can hardly be said, however, that Mr. Oesterley was very felicitous in his interpretation. As a matter of fact, the Psalm is an Incantation Psalm to be recited by different persons, and it was ascribed to Moses (see Num. 1., 12, 3). The XI Chapt. on Jewish Exegesis of the Psalms is of value to Christian readers only. That the "artificial" enumerations in the Midrash on Ps. 1 of twenty Beatitudes (*Ashre*) to cor-

respond with the twenty Woes in the book of Isaiah has its exact parallel in Luke 6, 21-26 and Matthew 5, 3 ff.; 23, 13 ff., Mr. Oesterley failed to see, and so he might in many other instances have found the New Testament exegesis influenced by the Jewish Midrash.

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